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ABSTRACT

The author considers the importance of deep-seated cultural, economic, political, and geographical differences that characterize special education teacher training in the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands commonly referred to as Micronesia. A brief history and geography of the area is reviewed. The training program of the Trust Territory Department of Educations Special Education component is described. Noted among characteristics of the program are strong emphases on mainstreaming, development and dissemination of materials and/or procedures for identifying and remediating children's learning problems, and an approach which stresses the specific functioning of the student rather than the specific handicapping conditions. (SBH)

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# SPECIAL EDUCATION TEACHER TRAINING

# IN THE

# UNITED STATES TRUST TERRITORY OF THE PACIFIC ISLANDS

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# SPECIAL EDUCATION TEACHER TRAINING IN THE UNITED STATES TRUST TERRITORY OF THE PACIFIC ISLAND/MICRONESIA

(Delivered During the 57th Annual Convention/
Council for Exceptional Children, Dallas
April 27, 1979)

by

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It is a great honor and privilege for me on behalf of the Community College of Micronesia to extend greetings to all participants of this convention. The purpose of this presentation, aside from contributing to the general theme by which my other colleagues and I from the Pacific State and territories are addressing today, is to make it reasonably clear to participants of this convention that there is need to fully aware and/or consider the importance of deep-seated cultural, economic, political and geographical and hence social differences that characterize "Teacher Training" in the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands commonly referred to as "Micronesia." In order to explain the unique circumstances of this political entity, and how Teacher Training and/or Education is generally affected, I would like to share with you brief review of the history and geography of the area.

Micronesia is being administered by the United States under a 1947 Trusteeship Agreement with the United Nations located north of equator, Micronesia's total area is approximately that of the Continental U. S. covering almost 3,000,000 square miles, of which only 700 is dry land about the size of the Rhode Island. Many of the islands are only minute dots of sand and coral which cannot support permanent habitation. It is located between 1°and 20° north latitude and 150° - 169° east longtitude. The 2,100 islands comprised the territory of which only 96 are inhabited. The current total population is estimated at about 114,645 people, with an annual growth rate of 5% (percent). According to the Bureau of Education, there are approximately 39,000 school age children attending the various district schools. Micronesia is now operating approximately 236 public elementary and high schools and there are approximately 36 private non-profit elementary and high schools. Three major groups comprise Micronesia, the Marianas, the Carolines, and the Marshalls. It is to be noted that Guam in the Marianas has been geographically defined as part of Micronesia; but politically is not part of the U. S. Trust Territory; but rather is politically an unincorporated part of the U.S., even more recently (January 8, 1978) the remaining Mariana Islands politically joined the U.S. as a territory now known "Commonwealth of Northern Marianas." The Carolines Islands are divided into five districts, with the Western Caroline Islands forming the districts of Yap and Palau, and the Eastern Carolines forming the districts of Kosrae, Ponape, and Truk. In all, the territory stretches more than 2,700 miles east to west, and 1,300 from north to south. Recently, Palau and the Marshalls are in the process of breaking away from the necleus territory to independently seek for separate political status.

The people of the Trust Territory, are commonly known as "Micronesians" with the exception of Kapingamarangi and Nukuoro people and a scattering of

individuals of other cultural groups. Traditional customs differ between districts as well as to some extent between islands and districts. These and other factors related to isolation and specific environmental factors have resulted in local adaptation and inventions. There is a basic similarity throughout, in terms of general cultural characteristics, such as close adjustment to life on a small tropical island. Physically, the Micronesians are characterized by medium stature, brown skin and straight-to-wavy black hair. A slight physical variation tends to exist from district to district. Many of distinctions in cultures have to do with the manner in which a group has learned to live in harmony with the island environment in terms of relationship to the lagoon and the open sea area around it. Specialized technologies using stone, shell, fibers, and local materials have been developed and adapted with patterns of daily and commercial behavior. Class distinction and narrow political loyalties close kindship ties, a cult of ancestors, and leadership by chiefs and sub-chiefs still exist in varying degrees in the island cultures of the territory. Differing degrees of acculturation can be noted depending upon the contacts with the Spanish, German, Japanese, and U. S. Administrations and other cultures that have washed over the islands in the tides of era and political maneuvering.

Linguistics divide the language spoken by the 115,000 Micronesians into ten distinct groups: Chammoro (spoken in the Marianas), Palauan, Yapese, Trukese, Ponapean, Marshallese, Kapingamarangi and Nukuoroan (Polynesian Languages spoken in the Ponape District), and a tenth language group composed of Carolinian (in the Marianas), Ulithian/Woleaian (in Yap) and Tobian/Sonsorolese (in Palau).

It is the emergence of this latter phonemenon, this widening cultural generation gaps, about which Micronesians are presently most concerned. In the face

of the rapid cultural change taking place throughout the Trust Territory, Micronesians feels that their children are losing many traditional values and skills and that they are learning and understanding less and less of their own heritage.

Realizing this, however, and recognizing that the Micronesian children spend a significant number of their waking hours in school, parents, Parent Teacher Associations, and other pressure groups have strongly expressed a desire for the educational system to should part of the responsibility of teaching children about their cultural and linguistic heritage.

English, however, is the communication tool that makes it possible for Micronesia to function as an entity and to participate in the world outside of the territory. Just as each of the territory's cultural groups is a thread in the tapestry of Micronesia, English is the interwoven wrap, holding the districts and their cultures together, somewhat.

Traditionally, education in these islands was a family affair. It was varried on in the home, where father taught his son(s) all kinds of male activities pertaining to the male role in the family. These were based on prescribed and well-defined labor divisions. While there were specific trades which were exclusively transmitted from the father to the son as family trades, there are also communal activities that young men and women were taught in a wide context to instill in the youths the spirit of communal cooperation. Education or training in this regard was and to a varying degrees in various Micronesian culture, is still a way of life as opposed to the formal or institutionalized education which aims to be a preparation for adult life following formal schooling.

Most of the Caroline group did not experience formal education until the German Colonial Administration of 1899 through 1914 and the Marshalls from 1888 through 1914. The Marianas were the first group to experience some form of formal education. During the German period, the educational system in the Marianas, Yap, and Palau were run by Catholic Missionaries of the Capuchin Order as Protestant school systems. The schools in Kosrae and Ponape districts were run exclusively by Protestant (U.S.L.) Boston Missionaries. The schools in Kosrae and some schools in the Marshalls, taught the English language in addition to the vernacular and other subjects. The subjects taught in most schools throughout the Marianas (except Guam part of U.S.), Carolines and Marshalls were German vernacular, world history, geography, arithmetic, music, and an emphasis on religion. Formal education was much more developed in the Marianas (Guam now under U.S.) than in other districts in the curriculum area and in attendance required. In 1906 the first secular school was established by the Government. Attendance was made obigatory for all children between seven and thirteen years, and fines were imposed for non-attendance. In most districts, the German Administration stressed economic development while schools were left in the hands of Missionaries.

In 1914 the Japanese Navy control of all the German Colonial holdings in Micronesia, immediately the Japanese Navy established schools in most of the major islands, similar in type to those established by the German Missionaries except that the religious instruction was eliminated and Japanese was substituted for German. This initial Japanese system was called the natives or islanders school and was basically a three (3) year program. Later in the Japanese period as the civilian administration developed during the mandate period, school for Micronesians changed to Public School with three years compulsory

education and two additional years optional with emphasis on boys and girls. A territory-wide vocational school was establish in Palau in 1927 for training in carpentry. In 1940 this program was expanded to include in its curriculum courses in automechanics, electronics and surving. Enrollment was very limited with very high competition among the Micronesians. In reality, the Japanese established two school systems in Micronesia: (1) the Micronesian system of three to five years elementary and two to three years vocational skills; and (2) the system for Japanese nationals consisting of six years elementary, two years intermediate, and four years high school. Micronesians were not privilaged to enter the Japanese school system. The school system of the Japanese Administration was largely for the endoctrination of the natives with Japanese ideas. While there were many worthwhile things accomplished under the Japanese Administration there was a tendency for Micronesians to be put in the position of being lower class citizens. Local languages were completely eliminated from the curriculum. Most subjects were taught by note-memorizing. Group reading in unision was a common way of teaching reading. Most teachers were recruited from Japan. Each school usually had one Micronesian teacher, who served as interpreter. Compartmentalization was the only arrangement practiced in the school system with one teacher staying with the same group all the way from the first grade through the third grade. Turn over in Japanese staff was low.

Schools, like every thing else were interrupted in most places during World War II and when the war ended the education system as it had existed was gone. The Micronesian economy along with all other fortunes collasped immediately. The war had destroyed much of the Physical Plant the Japanese has built, but more importantly, the system itself had been Japanese. When

the Japanese were deposed and then repatriated, the Americans found that there was no Micronesian managerial class. Yet dealing with modern systems requires at least-little education, and all at once there was a premimum on graduates of of Carpentry School, the highest education offered Micronesians. Any Micronesian with a facility for learning English was drawn quickly into the new system. The Navy added schools to the list of things it had to do and before long it had established a system of universal education to the sixth grade, thus from the beginning doubling the Japanese effort. It set up a system based on three levels of two grades each and expected a school to open in every community. Micronesian teachers were the immediate need, and educators were brought from Hawaii to train them. Hasty classes were set up and likely Micronesians were given six months' tutoring and sent back to their villages and islands to open schools.

In 1947 the Navy established the Marianas Islands Teacher Training School (MITTS) on Guam and offered a year training program for the purpose of orienting and training Micronesian teachers from around the districts. In the early 1950s the then Trust Territory Director of Education, Dr. Robert Gibson, moved the school to Truk, and it was renamed the Pacific Islands Teacher Training School (PITTS).

PITTS grew and served a fundamental role in the educational development of Micronesia. By the time 1958 arrived PITTS had become diversified and offered courses of instruction in other areas beside teaching. It was then decided by the education officials to focus the curriculum at the school more precisely and make it a territorial wide high school. This was accomplished and PITTS became PICS --- The Pacific Island Central School -- the first, and then the

only high school in the Trust Territory. Subsequently, PICS moved to its present site at Ponape which is today one of over thirty high school in Micronesia and is appropriately renamed to the Ponape Islands Central School.

In the early days of PICS, however, there was still a need for teacher training to be done inside of Micronesia as well as outside by this time increasing numbers of Micronesians were leaving the territory to attend colleges elsewhere. In 1963 the Micronesian Teacher Education Center (MTEC) --- was established in two classrooms at PICS as a result of an agreement entered into between the Trust Territory and the University of Hawaii by which the University assumed the charge of administering MTEC.

From its establishment in 1963 until the end of the 1966-67 school year, MTEC was a one year teacher training institution. In the fall of 1967, MTEC added a second year to its program--and since that time the institution has offered a two-year program. From these two classrooms-a year modest beginning-the present day Community College of Micronesia developed and grew. It was in 1970 that MTEC became CCM --- the Community College of Micronesia and the involvement of the University of Hawaii was substantially modified.

As of July 1, 1971 the Trust Territory assumed responsibility for the recruitment and appointment of a new Director. The next, and logical stage in the development of CCM was for it to become more diversified, and also improve its instructional and academic quality. It was in 1973 that all services (in terms of personnel) provided to the Community College of Micronesia by the University of Hawaii were finally ended-and CCM managed its own

programs from there on. By that same year CCM had become a candidate for accreditation by the Western States Accrediting Commission of Schools and Colleges in California.

The Community College of Micronesia has since been steadily growing in physical size, program development, fiscal allotment and responsibilities, and students' involvement---and finally at the end of the summer 1978 was given accreditation honor by the Western Association. Prior to that year the Congress of Micronesia formalizing its recognition of the College's growth and hope in its future, passed a bill which subsequently became Public Law 7-27 creating a College of Micronesia, and which includes the Micronesian Occupational College in Palau, the Trust Territory Nursing School in Saipan, and the Community College of Micronesia in Ponape. The Public Law makes the College of Micronesia autonomous and independent of the Trust Territory Department of Education which also creates a governing board --- a Board of Regents.

While the foregoing serves as a general review of the historical, geograhpical, and environmental factors relate to present condition in Micronesia, it is also appropriate that we briefly review more specific teacher training opportunities as they existed in the initial days of special education development.

In general, there is an indication that the child with a handicap is integrated naturally into his/her social group and, on the whole realistic expectations are placed upon him/her in terms of task performance at hom. Along with this high value of children comes the presence of many tasks that do not require a great deal of skill. Many such tasks rather great patience to do simple things in repetitive fashion. Often, older adults are utilized to meet the needs of handicapped children and to provide greater purpose to their

presence in the home. As already mentioned earlier---education was part of the family affairs and likewise caring and training others---especially sisters/brothers of the handicap to help meet his/her needs was an integral aspect of the family responsibilities. There was never anything formal during those days.

It was not very long ago, in August 1968, that the Special Education component of the Trust Territory Department of Education came into being, under the ESEH Title VI grant. As a point of departure and means of contacting the children in the schools, vision and hearing screening programs were initiated. From those needs---eventually derived the establishment and implementation of a one year training program which was a direct function of the Department of Education Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands. This one year project included a six week visit to each of the six districts with purpose of screening school children, and training available district personnel - teacher - in the use of the audiometer, screening techniques, referral of children found with problems, and counseling with teachers regarding problems in the classroom.

One of the major goals of that project was to utilize interested permanent and available persons in each district, through specialized training in identification and habilitation of the handicapped children within each district. Training of allied support personnel to carry out the program functions was the major concern which evidently transported few locally recruited individuals to the U.S. mainland for intensive training in some specialized fields.

Continuing as a direct function of the Special Education in the Trust Territory, in 1971 the one year Special Education teacher training component was

added to as an integral function of the overall teacher training program at the Community College of Micronesia with substantial modifications made to include a component on hard to teach and a Learning Resource Center to facilitate special education material needs in the districts as well as the training center. The subsequent training efforts resulted from the institutional support grant made available to CCM through the Special Education Division at the Department of Education under EHA Title III and VI - D from the United States Office of Education.

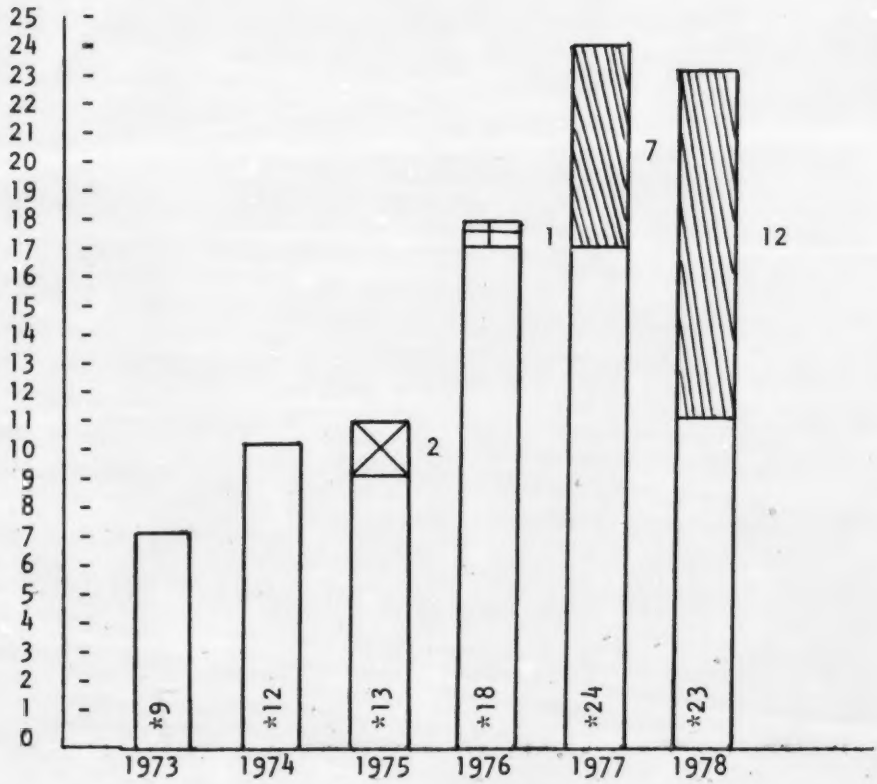
Since the establishment of the Special Education training component at the Community College of Micronesia the Coordinator of that training was responsible for implementing the college pre-service and in-service training programs for personnel from all the districts. The urgent need that the time---was to provide more trained teachers with basic special education skills so they could provide services to a larger number of handicapped children and to a greater range of handicapping conditions. Due to limited funding, luck, however, the CCM program was only able to provide a three-quarter training sequence to certify itinerant teachers who could work with the Mildly and Moderately Handicapped Children.

Special Education in the Trust Territory h-lds the view that handicapped children, for them to function as much as they can like normal individuals, must be provided educational opportunities in as normal a situation as possible. In keeping with this philosophy the Trust Territory Special Education sets up programs for children and their teachers with the necessary material and supportive personnel resources. Because of the Trust Territory's strong emphasis on mainstreaming of handicapped children, the Special Education training at CCM is attempting to train all teachers. Between the school year 1971 to 1974 the CCM Special Education training program have turned out 18 competent---cer-

tified --- itienrant teachers and have provided 189 regular CCM students --- majoring in regular education --- with introductory courses in Special Education. Since the Special Education training program at CCM was the only specialized teacher training institution in the Trust Territory for Special Educatoin personnel --- recognizing its limitedness in program offerings --- it was necessary for the Trust Territory Special Education Division to make special arrangements with institutions outside of Micronesia to help meeting some of those pressing needs mandated by law, which CCM as of that time not able to carry out.

Fianlly the Special Education component became an integral department of the Community College of Micronesia in 1975 and submitted a grant application to the BEH office in Washington which established its present A.S. Degree program by fall of the following year. The degree program offered three major specialty areas: (1) Mildly & Moderately Handicapped; (2) Auditorily Handicapped; and (3) Visually Handicapped. Through this project, trainees can complete the major requirements for A.S. Degree in Special Education at the CCM campus and/or Certificate of Achievement with area of emphasis in one of the already mentioned components. In addition to providing pre-service training during the regular school year it also provided up-grading sessions during the summers for Special Education personnel from all over Micronesia. The Special Education Department at CCM is also responsible for developing and disseminating materials and/or procedures for identifying and remediating children's special learning problems in the districts and therefore, provides direct consultation services to districts' programs upon request.

The following illustrations is to show the number of trainees that have successfully completed the CCM Special Education training program with the level of academic accomplishment each trainee already made to date.




Certificate of Achievement

A.S. Degree in Special Education

B.A. Degree

M.A. Degree

* Total enrollment each year

At this time the Special Education programs in the Trust Territory are beginning to meet the needs of most of the children having certain types of handicapping conditions through the work of personnel trained through the Special Education program at the Community College of Micronesia at the same time many additional handicapped children with unique needs throughout the Trust Territory identified through continuous screening and assessment still remain a critical need yet to be met.

Because of unique geographical, linguistic and professional constraints, and philosophic concerns, for educational purposes, children in the Trust Territory have been divided into categories of handicapping conditions somewhat differently than is the usual case. Although we can identify children with significant auditorily and visually handicaps, because of lack of standardized testing devices, inconsistent medical and educational support services, cultural variables, and physical isolation of small population clusters, it is extremely difficult to identify children who fit such categories as Educable Retarded, Minimal Brain Dysfuction, or Emotional Disturbance, etc. In the Trust Territory, the cause of a handicapping condition is often difficult to establish. Some student difficulties might be due to poor quality of instruction or difficulties due to a curriculum that is not relevant or well-planned but not necessarily to inherent malfunctioning of the student.

Because of these factors, the approach has been to emphasize the specific functioning of the student rather than the specific handicapping conditions. Children are described as having mild, moderate, or severe handicaps according to their level of functioning in their surroundings.

Also, because of small population centers and large distances separating islands --- perhaps with school populations as small as 15 to 20 --- the

attempt has been established categories which would facilitate the instruction of children within integrated classrooms and in programs with mixed categories of handicapped children insofar as possible. Even in establishing such categories as mild, moderate, or severe, difficulty arises in placing the child. Children are ideally placed on the basis of observation and/or measurable data about their relative performance on specific tasks and their observable behavioral characteristics, and not primarily on diagnostic category. Additionally, the descriptions of the categories must reflect each child's relative performance in comparison with his/her age or grade peer group.

In order to meet the needs established at the territorial level --- and as education of the handicapped is a relatively new effort in Micronesia --- the Special Education Department at CCM work in close cooperation with the Trust Territory Bureau of Education in Saipan and the districts and all major program decisions are made after joint planning. This enables CCM to plan its program to reflect the needs existing in each of the districts and helps to move in the directions established by the annual projected activities.

The Special Education Department at CCM is currently staffed by a Coordinator who has the responsibility of coordinating all Special Education activities at CCM in addition to providing classroom instruction and field supervision of trainees in the Visually Handicapped training component. Additionally, there are two teacher trainers in the areas of Auditorily Handicapped and Mildly & MOderately Handicapped who have teaching responsibilities especially in the special skills areas and who privide consultation and in-service training to district programs having such handicapped children. And lastly, and administrative assistant for this project who provides clerical support in addition to performing other related duties.

Education in general, has brought enlightenment to Micronesian thinking. Under the three previous colonial power, this opportunity was never afforded the Micronesians. The education they received was mostly in technical training. It was only enough for Micronesians to perform certain skills and remain happy and undisturbed. That is why no Micronesians, until now, ever thought of challenging the early establishments or even talking about future political status under the German and the Japanese regimes.

I do not want to end my remarks today without saying a few words about those American friends who had served the educational needs of Micronesian in the past. Without their earnest efforts and supports, Micronesian would not have been what it is today. Speaking on behalf of our delegation today and also on behalf of our people back home --- I would like to recognize and honor at this very convention with or without the presence of those good American friends - for their true spirit of devotion, dedication and long time involvement in the making of Education better in Micronesia. For this, I would like to partically recognize and honor a very important and distinguished lady, who have served some very long-good years --- cherishing education in Micronesia - after which time she had worked for 31 years as a distinguished educator at the University of Hawaii - then the College of Hawaii. During her long-full-time teaching profession in Micronesia in which she was very instrumental in helping - setting up schools --- she became the first Principal of the Pacific Island Central School in Truk. Now residing here in Dallas --- an 87th year old exhubrant retired professional educator, Mrs. Cecely Perman Pickerill, who has been and will be long remembered as one of the best friends by many generations of Micronesians.

I appreciate your end attention and hope that the informations will be of some use to you.